

Cymbal Applications

When choosing cymbals, there are a few important considerations you must make, such as the type of music you'll be playing, the size of the band you'll be playing with, the weight of drumstick you use, and the acoustic qualities of the rooms you'll be playing in. Since many drummers are branching out to play varied musical styles, different cymbals might be required for different musical applications.

Larger cymbals will produce more volume and sustain, but have a slower reaction time; smaller cymbals have less projection and sustain, but a quicker reaction time. Therefore, in an intimate setting such as a small jazz club, or a wedding reception in a small restaurant with waxed wooden floors and big windows, you wouldn't want to use large cymbals, as they could overpower the room, as well as the other musicians on the bandstand. Conversely, on a rock gig in a 500-seat club, larger cymbals would be more appropriate in terms of volume requirements, especially if you're not miked. Small cymbals used on a loud gig will be more prone to breakage because they're overworked. Their less-than-ample volume in that type of situation just causes the drummer to hit them even harder with his heavy rock drumstick, straining to get volume, and thus, causing possible cracking.

Rock or Medium weight crash cymbals would be best suited to rock or heavy metal-type gigs, due to their loud explosive properties. The heavier the cymbals, the higher the pitch, and since higher pitches cut through better, a Medium-Heavy, Heavy, or Rock Ride would give

more stick sound, less overtones, and more volume, along with a louder bell sound. A heavier ride cymbal also enables the drummer to play with a harder stroke. For sheer volume, with hi-hats a heavier-bottom hi-hat cymbal will yield increased volume, so for rock playing, either 14" or 15" hats in Regular, Rock, or Leopard weights will do the trick, giving a louder stick sound, and louder "chick". Besides their obvious cosmetic purposes, 'Brilliant finish' cymbals add a slight "edge" to the sound. For special effects, a Chinese cymbal is always a good addition, but in softer playing situations, it may be too over-bearing.

The machine-hammered AA cymbals with their bright metallic sounds and sharp attack are ideal for use in high volume situations. The hand-hammered HH cymbals, on the other hand, possess warmer, darker and more personal sounds. With their flanged edges both the AA and HH Sound Control series respond quickly with sounds free of excessive overtones.

A sample rock set-up might include a 20" - 22" Medium-Heavy, Rock, or Leopard ride, 16" and 18" Medium crash, 14" Regular or Rock Hats, 18" Chinese, and maybe and 18" Crash Ride or 18" Rocktagon, which will give a second ride sound, as well as another crash. A 12" Rock Splash for accents is always nice, but don't hammer it TOO much!!

For "commercial" gigs, wedding, etc., you need cymbals which will fit pop, rock, jazz, standards, polkas, tarantellas, and everything else in between. Here, a 20" Medium,

Medium-Heavy, or Sound Control ride would give a better blend to those various styles, as would a 16" Medium-Thin crash and a 14" Thin or Sound Control crash. 14" Regular Hats or 13" Fusion Hats won't clutter up the band's sound, but will give a tighter definition of the beat. For accent punctuations, add an 8", 10" or 12" Splash.

For acoustic jazz gigs, the HH line is much warmer-sounding. A 20" ride (either Sound Control, Light, or Medium), 14" and 16" crashes (Sound Control, Thin or Medium-Thin) and 13" or 14" hi-hats (Fusion, Regular, or Light) might do nicely.

In big-band playing, a combination of AA's and HH's would enable you to blend in with the other instrument sounds without being too obtrusive, as well as play accents with the horns using the sharper, brighter AA crashes.

Recording studio situations require lighter, drier sounds, since everything is close-miked in a "controlled" environment. Designed specifically to meet the demands of studio recording, AA and HH Sound Control crash and ride cymbals deliver fast, clear sounds with a minimum of lingering overtones. Still, the musical style would dictate the types of cymbals to bring.

Just as you wouldn't use an 18" bass drum on heavy-metal gig, you should fit your cymbal sounds to the music you're playing. With critical listening, the cymbals you choose will allow you to play with sensitivity, awareness, and musicality. ☺

